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REPRESENTATIONS OF DISTANCE: DIFFERENCES IN UNDERSTANDING DISTANCE ACCORDING TO TRAVEL METHOD

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores how Danish tourists represent distance in relation to their holiday mobility and how these representations of distance are a result of being aero-mobile as opposed to being land-mobile. Based on interviews with Danish tourists, whose holiday mobility ranges from the European continent to global destinations, the first part of this qualitative study identifies three categories of representations of distance that show how distance is being 'translated' by the tourists into non-geometric forms: distance as resources, distance as accessibility, and distance as knowledge. The representations of distance articulated by the Danish tourists show that distance is often not viewed in 'just' kilometres. Rather, it is understood in forms that express how transcending the physical distance through holiday mobility is dependent on individual social and economic contexts, and on whether the journey was undertaken by air or land. The analysis also shows that being aeromobile is the holiday transportation mode that removes the tourists the furthest away from physical distance, resulting in the distance travelled by air being represented in ways that have the least correlation, in the tourists' minds, with physical distance measured in kilometres.

Keywords: Distance, Representation, Aeromobility, Tourism.

JEL Classification: R41, Z30, Z39

1. INTRODUCTION

Travelling on holiday is an activity undertaken by increasing numbers of people globally (UNWTO, 2016). Almost everywhere is a potential destination for an increasing variety of niche tourism industries and the holiday mobility routes are becoming ever more complex by the increased connectivity and ease with which tickets and accommodation can be booked. This increasing holiday mobility is becoming part of what constitutes life in contemporary society, where transcending distance is both desired and necessary for social and economic relations (Urry, 2000). Tourists travel to meet up with friends and relatives (Larsen, Urry & Axhausen, 2007), they travel to see interesting places or events (Urry, 2002), they travel on business (Lassen, 2006), they travel on pilgrimages and sports holidays (Urry, 1995), and for a variety of other reasons. According to UNWTO (2016), 54% of international tourism travel is conducted by air, 39% on the road, 5% on water and 2% on rail. Being aeromobile is thus a central element of contemporary tourism. Aeromobility is a broad concept that encompasses the full range of activities, infrastructures, meanings, economics, etc. at the intersection of mobility and aviation (Cwerner, Kesselring & Urry, 2009). The three main categories of air travellers are leisure tourists, business travellers, and people travelling to visit friends and relatives (Cwerner, Kesselring & Urry, 2009). All three of these categories

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can be, and are, understood as tourism in a broader sense (Lassen, 2006; cf. Yousuf & Backer, 2015), justifying the conclusion that being a tourist today is also likely to result in being aeromobile.

All this travelling, whether it be by air or land, obviously involves transcending distance. While the reasons tourists travel have been explored through a number of studies over the years (Cohen, 1979; Crouch, 1999; MacCannell, 1999; Ryan, 2002; Sharpley, 2002; Sheller & Urry, 2004), how tourists think about the distance that is an inevitable part of their mobility has received comparatively little attention. It is recognised within social sciences that distance is not 'just' distance. Watson (1955) argues that geographical exploration needs to view distance also in terms of the cost and time of transcending it, naming this 'cost and time distance', and emphasising that social distance is a more accurate signifier of distance within urban environments than physical distance. Janelle (1968), Harvey (1990) and Giddens (1984) introduced other conceptualisations of distance through time-space convergence, time-space compression, and time-space distance, focussing in different ways on how physical distance appears altered through technological, infrastructural, and societal developments.

Also, within tourism studies distance is recognised as a concept that includes more than just physical distance, although physical distance obviously is a central element due to the necessity of spatial movement. Hall (2005) and Cooper and Hall (2008) discusses how the distribution of tourists' travel behaviour in space and time reflects an ordered adjustment by the tourist to distance. When tourists decide where to go and how, their choices are an attempt at minimizing the friction of distance, but not just distance understood as kilometres. Cooper and Hall (2008) lists eight types of distance that can influence travel behaviour: Euclidean (physical) distance, time distance, economic distance, gravity distance, network distance, cognitive distance, social distance, and cultural distance. The travel behaviour of tourists can be seen in relation to all of these different types of distance. It is not necessarily the physical distance from one place to another that is relevant in assessing travel behaviour; Hall (2005) argues that research into how distance influence tourists' travel behaviour needs to be flexible in how distance is being conceptualised for analytical purposes. Distance is more than just a measure of kilometres from one place to another; rather, distance is relative to the social and economic context of the tourists, where individual circumstances are important for knowing what forms of distance becomes relevant, and how much of an impact a given distance, in a given form, will have on deciding travel behaviour.

The first objective of this paper is to identify the different forms in which distance can become relevant for tourists. In this paper, this 'translation' of distance from Euclidean distance to other ways of understanding distance is referred to as 'representations of distance,' by which is meant the ways in which distance takes on other, non-geometric forms besides kilometres. Further, this paper also has a second objective: exploring how being an *aeromobile* tourist influences the perception of distance, and how this might differ from the perception of distance transcended across land.

2. DISTANCE AND TOURISM[2]

Tourism is manifest, desired travel and therefore a spatial activity. Any decision to travel for leisure will involve some form of reflection on whether and how to transcend the distance between home and a given destination. The transcendence of distance tempts tourists with promises of something different in another space and place, and sometimes even gives the illusion of the possibility of seeing another time. For tourists, the price of desire for

[2] This section on Distance and Tourism has previously been published in Larsen (2013)

somewhere else is the overcoming of distance. However, the tourist often does not appear to give much thought to this prerequisite, because (infra)structures are in place. This enables the tourist a reasonably smooth transition from being an everyday-human to being a tourist, where the actual movement across distance is often a routine and mundane activity that is not significantly different from everyday mobility aside from its destination (Edensor, 2007). Corporeal mobility is such an obvious part of tourism that it is often forgotten by researchers (Urry, 2002) or reduced to a practical problem for the tourist rather than regarded as a subject in its own right (Haldrup, 2004). Through the focus of this paper on tourists' representation of the distance they travel, the corporeal mobility of tourism is regarded as more than 'a practical problem', and thus this section explores how distance has been discussed in relation to tourism.

The effect distance can have on the destination choice can be both positive and negative. Nicolau (2008) discusses this conundrum, which is mostly based on a spatial, i.e. physical, understanding of distance, but it nonetheless shows links to relative distances:

> One train of argument holds that distance – or geographic position of the tourist origin relative to destinations – is considered a restriction or a dissuasive dimension of destination choice, as the displacement of an individual to the destination entails physical, temporal, and monetary costs (Taylor & Knudson 1973). Alternatively, another line of research proposes that distance can lend positive utility. Baxter (1980) shows that the journey itself, as a component of the tourism product, can give satisfaction in its own right so that, on occasions, longer distances are preferred (Nicolau, 2008).

Nicolau (2008) goes on to explore the factors that might influence whether distance becomes a positive or negative element of a destination choice. He identifies five variables that could explain different individuals' sensitivity to distance in relation to their choice of destination:

- Personal restrictions: income and number of children
- Socio-demographics: size of the city of residence and age
- Trip characteristics: use of intermediaries and transport mode
- Tourist behavior variables: interest in discovering new places and variety seeking
- Motivations: search for relaxation, search for climate, curiosity, and visit friends and relatives (Nicolau, 2008)

Nicolau's exploration is based on an empirical inquiry of individual tourists' destination choices. His conclusion is that a greater willingness to travel further is associated with high income, being a resident in a large city, the use of intermediaries, and the interest to discover new places, variety seeking behavior and the motivations of searching for climate, curiosity, and visiting friends and family. Inclination to not travel far is associated with having children under the age of 16 and when the purpose of a holiday is to simply relax (Nicolau, 2008). Cohen (1972; 1988) offers another view on how distance is important for understanding tourism. In his effort to offer explanations for tourists' motivations to travel, he argues that tourism must be understood as social relations, and that a tourist typology can be based on an individual's desire for familiarity or strangeness as part of their tourism experiences. This leads him to label four categories of tourists: the organized mass tourist, the individual mass tourist, the explorer and the drifter (Cohen, 1972). These represent tourists within a continuum ranging from desired familiarity with the destination/holiday experience to a desire for the unknown.

While the link between physical distance and destinations that offer the tourist familiarity or strangeness is not necessarily linear (physically close destinations can seem strange, and familiarity can be produced far away, in for example holiday resorts), there is a clear link between cultural distance and familiarity/strangeness of holiday experience. The 'environmental bubble' (Cohen, 1988) of familiarity creates a feeling of cultural proximity that appeals to the types of tourists labelled by Cohen (1972) as organized and individual mass tourists, while the explorer and drifter type tourists are more likely to seek out destinations and holiday experiences that are unfamiliar to them and their normal cultural context. Chen, Mak and McKercher (2011) relate Cohen's familiarity-strangeness continuum to physical distance by suggesting a linear link between long haul travel and culturally different destinations versus short haul travel and culturally similar destinations. This is undoubtedly true for many holidays, but Cohen (1972; 1988) emphasizes that distance in relation to tourism is more than the physical distance from home to destinations – it is the tourist's relation to a destination that determines whether it is familiar, and therefore feels closer, or appears strange, potentially resulting in it feeling further away from home. This is an important insight for the research presented in this paper, as it highlights the relativity of distance and firmly establishes distance as a phenomenon within tourism that is more than just physical.

This understanding of distance in relation to how the individual tourist is able to relate to their destination will emerge later as an important element of how tourists represent distance. Hall (2005; 2008) is also concerned with distance in relation to tourism, and he argues that distance is basic to tourism accessibility, and that the 'distribution of travel behavior in space and time reflects an ordered adjustment to the factor of distance' (Hall, 2005). As noted earlier, Hall (2005) presented a list of relative distances that influence tourism: time-distance, economic distance, cognitive/perceived distance, and social distance. These 'relativist notions of space in a non-physical sense' (Chapman, 1983) are elements of a discussion of the distribution of tourists and their destination choice based on spatial interaction models, such as the gravity model and the intervening opportunity model. The gravity model states that the interaction between two locations is a result of the strength (usually the population number) of the two locations and the distance between them (Ravenstein, 1885; 1889; Wrigley, 1980), in a relation whereby interaction becomes inversely related to distance. The longer the distance between the two locations, the less likely an interaction is, a phenomenon termed 'distance decay' by Eldridge and Jones (1991).

The effects of distance decay have long been recognized within social science and geography as a concept that outlines how distance exerts a frictional effect on demand (McKercher & Lew, 2003), but Hall (2005) claims that the influence of distance decay has not been fully explored in relation to what impact it has on the distribution of tourist arrivals. Hall (2005) notes that understanding distance decay and the influence it can have on tourist travel behavior should not regard distance purely in its physical sense, but rather recognize different perceptions of distance, that can inform a destination choice. This emphasizes the possibility of relative distance decay (i.e., where the distance element is not physical distance, but rather a representation of distance) where a tourist's choice of a destination physically further away than other potential destinations could be a manifestation of distance decay in relation to time distance or cost distance. In such a case the chosen destination would be prioritized over other, physically closer destinations based on shorter travel time or lower costs. The introduction of relative distance challenges the normal understanding of distance decay, but does not invalidate the idea behind distance decay in relation to understanding distance's role for destination choices.

Within the context of tourism, the intervening opportunities model, developed by Stouffer (1940), outlines that the choice of destination will be based on which destination,

among a number of destinations offering the same attractions, is closer (Hall, 2005). Hence it is the relative distance to a destination in comparison to distances to other destinations that becomes a determining factor for the destination choice, not the absolute distance. The intervening opportunities model offers, however, a slightly simplistic view on distance in relation to tourism destination choice. The model says that the closest destination will be chosen, but in order to apply this model analytically in an empirical context, awareness needs to be focus on what type of distance is the basis for the judgement of which destination is closer. It might be physical distance, but it could just as well be time distance or cost distance (Prideaux, 2000). The issue of accessibility is also important; how accessible a destination is (perceived to be) has an important role in a tourist's choice, which is linked to the type of distance(s) being applied to a tourist's assessment of the destination and the travel to that destination.

These two (essentially quantitative) models for understanding how tourists make their destination choice both have distance as a central element, but distance must not be understood only as a physical entity, because tourists do not only make their holiday decisions based on distance measured in kilometers. Distance understood in a nonphysical, relative sense is also important, and probably more so than physical distance. That distance is an element of a tourist's destination choice is not surprising, and has been established by a number of theoretical and empirical studies (cf. Kim & Fesenmaier, 1990; Wamsley & Jenkins, 1992; McKercher & Lew, 2003; Hall, 2005; Cooper & Hall, 2008). Also Ankomah, Crompton and Baker (1995) have explored how distance becomes an element in tourists' destination choice. They argue that cognitive distance, i.e., the distance a tourist perceives there to be to a destination, is a primary evaluation criterion for destination choice. The perception of distance is influenced by the apparent mis-estimation of physical distance by the tourists, where the further away a destination is, the more the physical distance will be overestimated, and the distance to closer destinations will be underestimated. The apparent mis-estimations of physical distance by tourists leads to at least two observations about the relation between tourism and distance that are relevant for the research presented in this paper. Firstly, it highlights the fact that physical distance is not necessarily experienced uniformly by tourists in spite of its standardization through uniform measurement units. Second, more important, is the finding that physical distance does not appear to be the measure of distance to destinations most widely used by tourists. This echoes Hall's (2005; 2008) reflections on how distance becomes part of a tourist's destination choice, and outlines that, for the purpose of exploring whether and how distance might be represented by tourists, physical distance should not be regarded as a distance-dimension that has prominence over other distance dimensions, and therefore be understood as not conceptually any different than the other, relative distances discussed above.

3. METHOD AND EMPIRICAL FOCUS

This research into how tourists represent distance in relation to their holiday mobility is based on explorative qualitative interviews conducted within a grounded theory approach, which is appropriate when aiming for development of theoretical reflections based on empirical data in a field where relatively little is known (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Thirty in-depth interviews were conducted over three periods from November 2010 to May 2011. The interviews lasted between one and two hours.

The focus for the interviews was how, and in what form, distance becomes an element of the destination choice and how transportation mode choices are influenced by the distance

between home and the holiday destination. The interview guide had four main themes, under which the role of distance was discussed, based on open-ended questions:

- Holidays undertaken, including the rationales for the destination choices
- Holiday dreams and desires
- Holiday transit and holiday transport modes
- The importance (or lack thereof) of place and distance in relation to holiday destinations and the notion of 'far away'

The interviewees were Danes aged from 26 to 67 years of age, representing a wide range of educational and occupational backgrounds. No criteria were set for the sample other than the interviewees would have to be Danish. This was because the study has aimed at exploring the variety of ways in which distance can be represented, and by excluding groups from the sample the study could have run the risk of missing some representations that might have been relevant for some groups but not others. It has not been an aim for the study to suggest representations of distance that are readily generalizable to other national or cultural contexts, but merely to suggest ways in which distance can be represented. It should be noted, then, that the 'list' of representations of distance discussed later in this paper is by no means exhaustive.

Through theoretical sampling, the data collection was allowed a wide scope, where the data analysis running in parallel with the interviews enabled the inquiry of a variety of reflections and viewpoints, giving the research sufficient width as well as depth. This enabled a qualified suggestion of how tourists do conceptualise and represent distance in relation to their holiday mobility. Theoretical sampling stopped when theoretical saturation was reached. The interviews have been analysed through the identification of themes emerging from the data, and the categorisations of distance representation reported on in the remainder of this paper stems from the empirical analysis, and is as such not based on a priori theoretical classification of potential distance representations.

The reminder of this paper presents the findings of the analysis of representations of distance as seen from the perspective of the tourist, first outlining how distance is generally perceived by the travellers, followed by insights into how the activity of aeromobility influences distance perception.

4. ANALYSIS

The sections below unfold the analysis findings and discusses the content and reflections on distance in relation to holiday mobility as they were expressed in the interviews. Based on the analysis of the conducted interviews with Danish tourists, three categories of representations of distance were identified. The interviews revealed a range of ways in which tourists represent distance, but it is possible to group these as follows:

- Distance as resources: distance becomes relevant for the tourist through the amount of resources that is needed in order to transcend that distance.
- Distance as accessibility: the perception of the distance to a potential holiday destination becomes relative to how accessible the destination is perceived to be via acceptable transport modes.
- Distance as knowledge: the level of knowledge about the destination (culturally or physically) and the level of knowledge of the route and transport mode is a factor in the perception of how far it is to the destination.

These categories have emerged from the data, and have been identified through a coding process. Here the transcribed interviews were coded according to open categories that would identify statements and reflections that in one way or another referred to the transcendence of distance by the interviewee. Following this open coding process, a thematic coding process combined the original distance representation categories, and resulted in a merging of categories on this list into the above mentioned three overall distance representations. As noted in the methodology section, the analysis has been guided, but not structured by the theoretical framework presented earlier in this paper, and therefore the following unfolding of distance representations is an empirical one rather than a theoretical one. As a result, it is not possible to identify a complete overlap between the theoretical distance representations highlighted earlier, and the empirical distance representations emerging from the analysis.

4.1 Distance as resources

Travelling on holiday involves spending money on transport, accommodation, food, activities etc., at least some of which would not have been spent had the tourist stayed at home. It also involves spending time away from home, work, and other daily contexts. Before going away on holiday the tourist will need to make a choice of whether the holiday is 'worth' spending the money and time on. Can they afford it and do they have the time to travel away? Depending on the economic and social context of the individual tourist, money and time are factors that can either enable or hinder travelling on holiday.

Money and time are very tangible price tags of a holiday (albeit not the only ones) and therefore these two appear to become easily associated with the notion of 'getting away' and set a rigid framework within which holidays have to be conducted. If you don't have the time and money to travel, it is unlikely that you will go on holiday, although there will be other reasons for not travelling as well, such as lack of incentive or lack of travel companions. Because of this seemingly simple relationship between holiday means, in the form of economic and temporal resources, and the possibility of going on holiday, these become factors that, to a certain degree, determine within which geographical limits the tourist travels. There has be enough money to pay for the transit and there must be enough time to travel to a destination and back again and still have time to experience the destination. Because money and time are needed in order to overcome distance, it is not the physical distance involved in holiday travel that is immediately relevant for the tourist, but the resources it will take to get from home to the holiday destination. Money and time, more so than physical distance, determines how far the tourist travels on holiday.

4.1.1 Economy

Cost-distance, or 'the monetary cost incurred in overcoming physical distance between two locations' (Cooper & Hall, 2008), is a recognised representation of distance, not just in tourism studies, but also in mobility and business studies. It costs money to transcend distance, either in paying the fare for travelling on planes, trains, ferries or coaches; buying the fuel for privately owned vehicles; or buying the equipment needed for a cycle or rambling tour. Very few forms of transport are entirely free and, when travelling on holiday, few individuals rely entirely on transport modes that they own, with driving holidays being the obvious exception. But even here the cost of fuelling the car will be significant and often comparable to the ticket price of trains or planes. It is no surprise then, that when asked about what determines how far they travel, price was often mentioned as the most important factor by the interviewees.

Understanding distance in terms of the cost of overcoming it makes distance relative, in spite of physical distance being an absolute entity. Cost distance will be relative to the

overall economic context of the tourist, and it will be relative to the transport mode, where the same physical distance can be overcome by different transport modes, that will have different costs. The economic context, and therefore the economic ability, of a tourist is linked to factors that are not directly related to the tourist's travel behaviour, but it is highly influential on how many economic resources the individual tourist can spend on a holiday, and thereby also to a certain degree how far the tourist is likely to travel. Tickets that are cheap for some might be expensive for others, making a particular journey more or less likely to happen. Cost distance is also relative to the transport mode chosen for a journey, and the chosen transport mode will influence the cost of transcending a given distance. Cycling is cheaper than driving, but that does not necessarily make the two different prices comparable, because cycling to a destination will take longer than driving to it, and other intrinsic or idealistic values might be the cause of a choice of bicycle over car. To compare one cost-distance to another is likely to only be meaningful if the two journeys had been undertaken using the same form of transport. That a journey has cost £1000 does not convey much information about how far the journey might have been, whereas the information that £1000 was spent on travelling by plane does give some indications.

In spite of cost distance not having the same absolute quality as physical distance, the use of cost-distance to represent distance makes distance easily interpreted by other people. Not everybody will be able to pay expensive tickets, but most will understand the measurement unit, and be able to set it in relation to other contexts. It makes sense to talk about how far a tourist has travelled in terms of the cost of the journey. It will not be an exact measure of distance (ticket prices vary according to class and flexibility among other things, the price of fuel is not constant and some stretches of distance are more expensive to transcend than others etc.). Nevertheless, cost-distance is widely understood and therefore widely usable as a measure of distance.

Price, therefore, can determine where tourists can and cannot travel. But the relationship between price and distance is not linear, where the further away means the more expensive. This depends on the transport mode, but also the accumulated price of the holiday. Just because travelling to a closer destination is cheaper, the overall price of the holiday might be more expensive than travelling further to a cheaper destination, as experienced by one interviewee (female, 29). She and a friend had originally planned not to travel 'far away' on their holiday this summer, but found that three weeks spent in Bali and Singapore was cheaper overall than a fortnight in Crete, primarily because of living expenses being significantly different in the two locations. This (lack of) linearity between distance and its representations will be discussed later in this paper.

4.1.2 Time

An oft-heard description of contemporary tourists is that they are money-rich, but time-poor, implying that if only they had the time, they would have the economic power to travel anywhere they like. To be able to take the time out to go on holiday is obviously a prerequisite, but it is clear from the interviews that time is not the predominant reason for people not to travel. The two main issues that have would-be tourists staying at home in the interviews are lack of money and lack of people to travel with. According to the interviewees, time resources are a significant factor in determining where and how far they travel on holiday. Time becomes important for travel behaviour in two different ways: the time spent travelling to the destination and the time spent at the destination.

It is a common description of how far a tourist is going away on holiday to say that the destination is a four-hour drive or a ten-hour flight away. This relays reasonably accurate information about the distance to a given destination, and just like with ticket prices, the time-distance is easily interpreted by others. Time-distance is 'the time taken to travel

between destinations' (Cooper & Hall, 2008), and the relationship between time and physical distance will be near linear if the transport mode is the same. It is reasonable to assume that the longer time of a flight, the further away in kilometres the destination is, and time spent in transit is clearly viewed as a signifier of how far away the tourist is travelling, according to the interviewees. Along with monetary resources, time is mentioned as the prime factor that determines how far they travel.

The time-resource they refer to as determining the distance travelled is not entirely made up of just time spent in transit though. The transit time has to be viewed in relation to the amount of time they are able to spend at the destination. The more time the tourist spends on getting to a destination, the longer they want to spend at the destination, so transit-time and destination-time are linked in a relationship where the one has to be justified by the other. For example, if 15 hours have been spent on a flight to reach a destination, a certain amount of time 'needs' to be spent at the destination. What was interesting in the interviewees' comments was that this also seems to become set in relation to transport mode. Having travelled by air to, say, Thailand, most would agree that the time spend at the destination should be more than a week, whereas if the same length of time, or indeed more, had been spend in a car driving to southern Europe, it is acceptable to not stay for any longer than a week. It would probably be reasonable to assume that the price of transit plays a role in this as well, as it is generally perceived that travelling outside Europe is significantly more expensive than travelling within Europe (which is not necessarily true), therefore adding the notion of 'getting your money's worth' to the reflections of time spend on holidays. This was, however, not expressed explicitly by in the interviews. Spending what was perceived as a long time in transit (travelling outside Europe) had to be justified by spending longer at the destination, while having purchased an expensive holiday did not in the same way require spending a long time away. Adding to this perspective is also the notion expressed by interviewees, of not travelling further 'than you have to,' i.e. there is no reason to travel to Thailand if the purpose of the holiday is a 'sun-holiday,' which can be had somewhere in the Mediterranean. Whether this distinction is a reaction to the longer time it would take to fly to Thailand, the perceived expense of tickets to Thailand, or in relation to the physical distance is unclear. One thing it is unlikely, though, is a reaction to the environmental effects, as only one of 30 interviewees included environment as an issue to be conscientious about in relation to travel behaviour. The other 29 interviewees only considered environment when prompted, often just to say that it is not an issue they give much consideration to.

The time spend at the destination becomes important in other ways besides just in relation to the time spent in transit. There has to be 'enough' time to spend at the destination. What 'enough' time is, will be determined to a certain degree of what the purpose of the holiday is (sun-holiday, sight-seeing-holiday, visiting family and friends etc.), how familiar the destination is, and how likely it is that the given destination will be visited again. Sun-holidays seems to be conceived of as very standardized in time, they are usually seven to fourteen days long, whereas see-holidays within Europe are shorter, and outside of Europe significantly longer. Holidays that are for the purpose of experiencing another place, which is outside of Europe have to be longer in time, because of the resources invested, the unfamiliarity of the place, and the idea that it is unlikely that the tourist returns to the same place. The same restrictions are apparently not applied to destinations within Europe, because that which is European is perceived as more known, and therefore more accessible culturally, and the journey there does not involve the same investment of money and time.

Physical distance is present in the considerations and actual travel behaviour of tourists, but through the economic and temporal resources needed in order to transcend distance. Asked whether they would travel more or longer if they had more money and more time,

a majority of those interviewed commented that they would probably travel both more and longer distances. Because of the reasonably straightforward relation between price and distance as well as time and distance in a holiday context, physical distance easily becomes translated into these concepts, rather than being used itself, when the tourists talk about their travel behaviour. The resources needed for a holiday are the factors that facilitate the holiday in the first place, and determine the radius within which the holiday destination will be. Resources are at the forefront of the interviewees' minds when talking about locations of destinations, because they are very tangible ways of expressing physical distance in a relevant form.

4.2 Distance as accessibility

After the resources required for transit, accessibility to a given location is mentioned in the interviews as a significant factor in differentiating perceptions of distance from physical distances. Places that are easier to get to are perceived as closer than places that are more difficult to get to, even if the physical distance is shorter to the more inaccessible places. Accessibility is a complex concept; questions of accessibility for whom, by what means, and in relation to what context are important questions. Places that are accessible for some are not so for others, and over time accessibility can change, both as a result of changes in individual circumstances of the person traveling and in circumstances regarding the place, e.g. the opening of a new flight route or similar. Accessibility has been expressed by the interviewees as relating to three issues in particular: infrastructure, i.e., how two places are linked in a network facilitated by the provision of various transport modes and institutions; resources, mainly time and money, which links into the above discussion of physical distance often being quantified through the resources needed in order to transcend distance; and the ease with which it would be possible to interact and navigate at a given location. This latter issue will be discussed in more detail in the following section. This section will focus on how infrastructural accessibility becomes a factor in the perception of distance.

The ease with which the tourists can arrive at the chosen destination appears an important factor in travel behaviour, more so than physical distance. Depending on the purpose of the holiday, the ease with which it is possible to get to a destination is viewed as an asset. The more routine the holiday is, e.g. if it is just the yearly sun holiday to the Mediterranean, the less time is allocated to the holiday and the more accessible the destination has to be; but if the holiday is regarded as an extraordinary holiday, accessibility to the destination becomes less of a factor in destination choice. On extraordinary holidays it is almost expected that all aspects of the holiday are magnified, both in terms of resources invested and places visited, and where the transit then becomes more than pure transport from home to destination. The more inaccessible the place and the more complex the journey, the more experience-value is added and the extra hassle is justified by the expected better rewards at the end of the journey as well as the experience of an extraordinary journey. That which for some would be a long haul flight, for others might be a more complex transit consisting of more transport modes and reliance on local guides and infrastructures.

Direct flight routes make places very accessible, to the degree that it determined where some of the interviewees decided to go on holiday. The destination was chosen based on where possible destinations when departing from the local airport. Having said that, perceptions of what is accessible is obviously an individual matter, depending on personal attitude, monetary resources and what modes of transport the individual has available. One interviewee commented that because she does not own a car, two of the three closest airports would never be chosen as departure airports because they are not connected with the rail

system, and it would be easier for her to travel across the country by train to the main international airport (female, 60).

Accessibility is obviously linked to transport modes and the connectivity of infrastructure. For some interviewees, accessibility is a matter of how well they are connected to a wide range of transport infrastructure, while for other interviewees it is a matter of having access to transport modes that give them a high level of control, primarily exemplified by the car, but also by some by the bicycle. Using these transport modes gives the highest level of control over route and times, which for some is more important than quick or cheap transit. The flexibility of the car, and to a lesser degree of the bicycle, makes more places accessible, and therefore in some interviewees' understanding, closer, because it requires less effort to get there. One interviewee commented that when you go on holiday using the car, it is easier to get to where you want to go, rather than having to adjust your schedule to using public transport (female, 34). Using public transport ties the tourist in space and time decided and controlled by others, which for some represents a lack of control and thereby accessibility.

To represent distance through accessibility is thus to place more emphasis on how it is possible to get to a place rather than how far it is in metric terms. Places then become nodes in an accessibility-network, which distorts physical distances and where the important feature of a place is whether it is connected or not. The tourists that have represented distance through accessibility are, to a certain degree at least, aware that accessibility is not a reflection of actual distances, but accessibility to a place becomes a more important factor than physical distance, because accessibility is what is relevant when contemplating how to get to a place.

4.3 Distance as knowledge

Tobler (1970; 2004) argues that the first law of geography is that everything is related to everything else, but near things are more related than distant things (Cooper & Hall, 2008). Undoubtedly true, this statement becomes nuanced in the light of a discussion of how knowledge and information about other places makes those places feel closer than they are, and closer than other, more alien places that might be physically closer. Knowledge can obviously be many things, but through the interviews, two categories that can be summarised under the heading knowledge have been identified as having an impact on how the interviewee perceives distance: knowledge of the culture at the destination, including the notion of feeling secure; and familiarity with the destination and/or the journey, including transport modes.

There are probably few places left where it is likely that a normal tourist will be travelling to and not have any knowledge of. Most places will be more or less known, maybe not through previous personal experience, but through knowledge from other people's experiences or various media coverage. Knowledge will possibly also be derived from an assessment of how similar the destination is culturally, so very few tourist-destination encounters will happen without prior knowledge of the destination. Indeed, part of going on holiday is to 'read up' on the destination; what activities and sights are available, some local history, etc. Some use the time spent in transit to brush up on their knowledge of the destination while others have it is a part of their decision-making process. The more unfamiliar a place is, the more, and the further in advance it seems the tourists are likely to familiarize themselves with the destination. On the other hand, places that are perceived as familiar, or that fall within a category of familiar destinations, the less practical and mental preparation is needed. One interviewee commented that the further away one is going, the further in advance you prepare and that this preparation can become a motivational factor in itself, where a place becomes more interesting the more knowledge is being accumulated (male, 30).

It is not a surprise that cultural similarities evoke a feeling of closeness in spite of physical distance. It is easier to relate to places that have similar cultural structures and institutions, and according to some interviewees they would have more reason to travel to places that are within some 'cultural boundary' within which certain degrees of familiarity and feeling of security would rest, but obviously for some, the destinations can't get alien enough. This is, however highly dependent on the purpose of the holiday, and there seems to be some relation between the degree of accepted cultural dissimilarity and resources invested, especially time. The level on acceptable cultural dissimilarity is obviously an individual matter, but if the holiday goes to a place that is perceived as very different, then more time is required at the destination, because it will take longer to get to know the place. Maybe this is part of the reason why the interviewees seem to associate cultural dissimilarity with distance.

Knowing how to get to a place can make the journey less daunting and strenuous. Pre-journey apprehension is often linked to the uncertainties the tourists imagine they might encounter en route. Questions of how to navigate various transport modes, whether there is enough time to transfer at transport hubs, how to get to the hotel at the other end of the journey and so on appears significant elements of a journey. But, the more familiar the tourist is with both the transport mode and the route, the less significant these factors get. Knowing how to 'operate' a certain transport mode gives a feeling of security, even though the route might be unfamiliar. Flying from Copenhagen to London more or less involves the same capabilities as flying from Copenhagen to Singapore, but if there are unknown stops along the route, the journey can become a cause for concern. As one interviewee explained, the first time she flew to the United States from Denmark, catching the connection in Frankfurt was an uncomfortable experience. But after she learned where to go and how long she had (or, in this case, didn't have) it was not a problem, because she knew what to do (female, 29). Familiarity with the institutions and processes where the individual is expected to act in accordance with regulations beyond the individual's control makes this activity seem easier, and therefore, arguably has an impact on how accessible a place might be for the individual tourist.

During the interviews, a number of the tourists commented that familiarity with a route made it feel shorter, but others commented that knowing the route didn't necessarily make it feel shorter, just easier. Knowing what to do and what to expect helped relax the anxiety of a journey, which most tourists related that they had experienced.

Knowledge as distance is a concept that involves what Cooper and Hall (2008) termed cognitive, social, and cultural distances. This is when perceptions of distance are influenced by the general knowledge held by the tourists, be it spatial, socio-economic or cultural, and where the link to physical distance might be weaker, or of a different character than for the two previously discussed categories of representations of distance. Where distance as understood through the lens of resources or accessibility had strong (linear) and logical links to physical distance, the distance that is perceived on the basis of knowledge is far less causally linked to physical distances.

It is not surprising that the level of knowledge about a place influences the perception of the location of a place in relation to home. Places thus become nodes in a mental network, where knowledge and connectivity are more important than actual distance and time-distance. The way in which knowledge appears to influence the perception of distance seems to be in a 'negative' way, where knowledge about other places and their cultures does not necessarily make them feel closer, but lack of knowledge about a place can make it feel further away. As one interviewee commented, if some place is home to an alien culture, it then feels even further away than it would have otherwise (female, 60).

5. DISCUSSION

Distance measured in kilometres becomes increasingly abstract and meaningless the further the distances are. Within a local area, distances given in metric units makes sense and relay useful and interpretative information that in an everyday context that is relevant for an individual. But when the distances become greater and relate to places that are unfamiliar to the individual, a distance represented in metric units will not yield the same quality of information. Physical distance is then being supplemented by other understandings of distance, ways in which physical distance is being translated into other forms, which are more meaningful and therefore relevant. In this paper, this understanding of distance being more than 'just' physical distance was explored through 30 tourists' reflections on how distance plays a role for their travel behaviour. Moored in previous discussions of distance, running back some 60 odd years and beginning with Watson (1955), this paper had two objectives: to identify different forms in which distance was represented by the interviewed Danish tourists, and to explore how being aeromobile might influence the perception of distance travelled, compared to how distance is represented using a land-based transport mode. This paper has explored how distance is being translated from physical, absolute units, to forms that are relative to economic and social contexts and more 'real' for individuals. When travelling on holiday, tourists relate to distance both physically by transcending distance and mentally by representing distance in forms other than kilometres. Three categories of representations of distance were identified: distance as resources, distance as accessibility and distance as knowledge. This section uses these findings to give suggestions on how aeromobility influences distance perception and representation.

5.1 Distance representations and aero mobility

Distance can be understood in terms of the amount of resources it will take to transcend a given distance; most tangibly as the time it takes to get from one place to another, and as the price of that given transit. In the interviews, there exists a perception that, generally, the longer the distance, the more resources are needed, i.e. the longer the transit in physical distance, the longer it will take and the more expensive it will be. This perception will be nuanced by the transport mode used, where a linearity generally is likely to exist if the transport mode is the same, whereas it obviously will take longer to travel a shorter distance by car than by plane. When distance is understood in terms of accessibility to a place, the relationship between actual physical distance and perceived distance becomes more distorted. Accessibility is defined by how easy it is possible to get from one place to another and how places are connected, not how close they are in the physical sense. Places that are easier to get to will seem closer than places that might actually be closer, but are harder to reach. It might be the case that places that are 'connected' are not being perceived as closer, but rather that places that are not viewed as accessible through that becomes further away, in some form of negative projection of distances outside a network. The category of distance representations that sees the weakest link between physical distance and perceived distance is knowledge. This can be knowledge of the specific destination, knowledge of the route and/or the transport mode, or knowledge of the cultural and social settings at the destination. Knowing a place and how to get there makes it 'feel' closer.

In the analysis of how the interviewed tourists represent distance, it was obvious, and maybe not that surprising, that the transport mode has a significant impact on how distance is perceived, and that being aeromobile is the travel practice that removes the tourist the furthest from the physical distance they travel. According to the interviews, travelling by air holds a range of positive elements, but engaging with the territory they travel across is not one of them, and neither is having an intrinsic travel experience. These two factors are central

for how distance is perceived as more than just time and money resources. Overwhelmingly, the distance travelled across in an airplane is perceived as time and as cost, i.e. distance as resource. None of the interviewees referred to flying distances in relation to their holiday travel in terms of physical distance, but only in terms of time, whereas journeys undertaken across land often would also have either a physical distance marker attached to it, or distance in one of the other representations mentioned above. This appears to be caused by the actual, physical detachment from the distance that you travel across in an airplane. If you are lucky enough to have a window seat, clear skies, and are flying at lower altitudes over land masses, you might be able to trace your progress and get some feeling of the physical distance, but often even the visual connection to distance is lost while in the air. This means that other forms of reference points are needed, and in the case of the interviews, this was most likely to be time, and in some cases, the cost of the tickets.

The interviewees expressed an awareness of the lack of intrinsically, i.e. value in its own right, of travelling by air, the air journey not in itself representing a journey value, as it is seen when the interviewees use other modes of transport across land. But this trade-off is happily made, because the air journey can offer rapid transit at a competitive price compared to land travel. On holidays with destinations further away (in metric terms), flying is often the only viable option. Travelling by air, however, is not an exclusively instrumental experience, as some interviewees mention that being aeromobile also holds some value and extra-everyday life experiences (such as travelling to, and being at, the airport, and the bodily experience of flight), that have come to symbolise holiday for them. But these experiences do not seem to translate into transforming the air-distance representation away from being mainly a resource representation, without any intrinsic distance experience as it can be seen in the other two distance representations discussed above, distance as accessibility and distance as knowledge. Those two are almost exclusively related to land based travel. When it comes to travelling on holiday across land, distance becomes a much more complex factor, that is constituted by a much more prominent awareness of the physical distance, combined with the three types of distance representations discussed above. But also, there is differentiation evident with car journeys and high speed train journeys offering a more instrumental transit service than the more intrinsic experiences had when the interviewees use slower transport modes such as bicycles, ferries, and walking. The pattern that emerges is that the slower the pace, the more distance perception becomes a phenomenon that is linked to a range of different values, such as knowledge and cultural difference or similarity. This is probably due to the interaction with the places travelled allowed by land based modes, and the slower the passing-through is, the more time there is to allow other factors than just time and money to become attached to the understanding of distance.

Therefore, a significant attribute of representations of distance is that they will presumably often be in relation to transport mode, or maybe more precisely, speed. The three categories of representations of distance stand in varying relationships to physical distance, where distance understood in terms of resources will have a stronger association with physical distance than with accessibility, which again is more strongly linked than knowledge-distance. The linearity between the physical distance and the distance representation signifies how longer physical distance is likely to influence the perception of distance derived from the representation of distance. Thus, it is common to assume that the more money or time spent travelling equals further distance, which shows a strong association, whereas high levels of knowledge of a place is not in a linear relation to physical distance to that place, not representing a 'true' reflection on distance in the physical sense. The correlation between money, time, and physical distance is not a linear one though, and an important element of this relationship is the mode by which the distance is overcome. Knowles (2006) discusses how a differential collapse in time/space is a result of successive transport innovations, an

argument that in this present context can be used to illustrate that the resources needed to overcome a given distance will be a result of what transport technology the tourists, for economic, social, or idealistic reasons choose for their holiday transit. From any given departure location, there will be places that are cheap to travel to, but further away than other places, which will be more expensive, and it might take longer to travel to places that are closer than to places which are further away. Therefore, it would be a flawed assumption to suggest that the more money the tourist spends on the holiday or the longer they spend on the transit to the destination, the further away the destination is. Nevertheless, the interviewees expressed a strong association between distance and money and time.

Another interesting perspective on the relationship between physical distance and its representations is the fact that some journeys are more than just transit from one place to another. Some journeys are intrinsic, and undertaken for the enjoyment of the journey itself. The previous discussions of representations of distance primarily relate to instrumental holiday travel, where the transit was undertaken by the tourist in order to get to a place, although some of the interviewees have engaged in intrinsic journeys, and have reflected on distance also based on these. But what is the significance of this juxtaposition of journey purposes for understanding representations of distance? Foremost is that instrumental travel is played out within a sphere of absolute space. The furthest possible instrumental travel would be to the other side of the globe, so to speak, travelling further than that on the same journey would suggest some other purpose than 'just' getting from point A to point B. Intrinsic travel, however, does not happen in an absolute space, because the purpose is not to get to a specific place, but rather to engage in the journey. Is distance being represented in different ways according to journey purpose? And is the distinction between instrumental and intrinsic so clear that this would be identifiable? A number of the interviewees comment on making instrumental journeys more enjoyable by adding elements to them that could be viewed as intrinsic (making the most of it, now that we are here). One thing seems to be sure though, and that is that the air journeys are much more instrumental than the land journeys, as travelling across land offers much more opportunities for giving the journeys intrinsic elements through the physical closeness to the 'content' of the distance travelled en route to the holiday destination.

The various representations of distance, of which arguably only some have been discussed here, together with physical distance, create an individual's knowledge of distance to specific places. Distances to some places might rely more on a representation through resources, while distance to other places will be a result of individual experience and knowledge. Through distance representations, the concept becomes relative because it is comprised of contexts that are themselves forever dynamic. Perceptions of distance change over time, because individual experiences over time alter the context within which distance is being represented by the individual. It is altogether possible, too, that distance to a given place will be represented in different ways, determined by the purpose of the relation at hand. One day it might be relevant to know that it will cost £500 to get to a place, another day it might be relevant to perceive that same distance in terms of cultural similarities. No representation of distance is likely to stand alone.

6. CONCLUSION

This paper has argued that distance is more relevant and more easily understood by tourists when it is being represented by other concepts such as resources, accessibility, and knowledge than when it is represented in mere kilometres. In relation to holiday travel behaviour,

distance is rarely referred to in its physical form, but rather as a translation into a form that relays more information about the stretch of space than 'just' the distance.

This paper has also discussed how being aeromobile has an influence on tourists' representations of distance in a different way than being mobile across land, with the flying tourist being further removed from both the physical distance of their journey as well as other contextualising factors framing distance. More than half of international tourists arrive at their destination by air, so this reduced perception and representation of distance as primarily time and cost could have magnitude impacts in a case where such an understanding of distance might lead to undesirable tourism travel behaviour. In an attempt to make tourism more environmentally sustainable, calls have been made for a reduction in air travel, both in terms of physical distance and frequency (Peters, 2007), but if the practice of leisure aeromobility conducted by tourists is linked to a distorted and un-reflected awareness of the distances actually involved in travel behaviour, it might be difficult to achieve the desired behavioural change (Hares, Dickinson & Wilkes, 2010). On a brighter note, with this insensitivity towards physical distance brought on by tourism aeromobility, few destinations are 'too far away' in metric terms, as the distance to them is assessed using other criteria. This has expanded the range of potential destinations as a result of air travel, benefitting both tourists and destinations.

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